ZEN NOTES

THE THREE TYPES OF RELIGIOUS METHOD

There are three types of devices – three steps – by means of which every religion is explained. And there are three different methods of practice by which religion is comprehended.

The first type employs metaphor. This metaphorical device assumes many different forms. Sometimes it assumes the form of mythology, as in Greek mythology, Japanese Shinto or Mantrayana Buddhism. Christianity also employs the symbolic or dramatic form. It pictures Heaven as a celestial city surrounded by a wall of gold whose great pearly gates are guarded by Saint Peter. A shining golden staircase, upon which angels ascend and descend, leads upward to the throne of God. And on this throne, in the center of Heaven, God is seated with Christ on His right hand. Such an allegory was invented to explain the religion. The explanation, however, is not of itself the religion. What it signifies is the religion.

The second type of device employs not the metaphorical but the philosophical method. This form of representation does not picturesquely arrange heavens and hells, gods and angels. It appeals to man's intellect. He forgets, however, that theology and philosophy are merely devices by means of which he may realize religion, forgets that their purpose is to make him think philosophically in order that by this thinking he may awaken to Reality.

The third type of device is this: to handle Reality Itself, and by handling It to awaken to the state of Reality. It is action, the same kind of direct action as you use in your daily life. When you are merely hotly discussing with your friend you say, "I will smite you!" But in direct action you hit him without a word.

Bodhidharma employed no reasoning and gave no explanation. To him every act from morning to evening was religion – swallowing water, eating food, sleeping, tending shop, talking to one's neighbors – every act was religion. Action was his way of practice. And you – either you are in this state, or you are not in this state.

But to attain this state we must abandon our customary conception of religion. When we come to this state and are in this state from morning to evening we do not need to explain anything. For that reason Bodhidharma said, "Devise no word!" Men of Zen devise no explanation. As the first act of their daily life they get up and put their feet into their slippers. But to realize this act as religion the mind must be enlightened.

Nansen was a famous Chinese Zen Master. One day he was in the woods near the temple cutting down trees with a huge axe. A monk who had come from a distance to pay homage to the Master passed through the woods and came close to the wood-cutter. "Is the Abbot of Nansen at home?" he asked the wood-cutter. The wood-cutter replied to the monk: "I bought this axe with two pieces of copper." And, lifting the axe above the astonished monk's head, he added, "It is very sharp!" The monk fled in dismay. Later he discovered that the wood-cutter was Nansen himself.

He who truly attains awakening knows that deliverance is to be found

right where he is. There is no need to retire to the mountain cave. If he is a fisherman he becomes a real fisherman. If he is a butcher he becomes a real butcher. The farmer becomes a real farmer and the merchant a real merchant. He lives his daily life in awakened awareness. His every act from morning to evening is his religion.

Sokei-an Sasaki
"Cat's Yawn" Vol. 1, No. 2
August 1940

SOKEI-AN STORIES

RIGHT VIEW

If you observe everything from the right view, nothing exists in the world which hides its nature from the eyes.

I made a poem a long time ago and I showed it to a friend whom I came across in New York. He laughed at me. From his standpoint, all the poems which exist in the world are just filthy stories! That is a wrong view.

And when I went back to Japan, a friend of mine was trying to write a scenario. Later someone bought it from him and made a moving picture. I was invited to see the performance. Then I realized the tragedy of ignorance! Occasionally you will see such films – badly written, no knowledge in them, no viewpoint – just vulgar and abominable – and spending so much money to produce it!

Sometimes I have observed someone who has never studied art to make a portrait. He will spend about fifteen dollars and draw his wife's portrait, making her suffer – sitting quiet day after day. Then he asks me in to see it and I cannot say a word. I look at the wife and at the painting and I cannot judge which is pig and which is ox! The tragedy of ignorance.

When a Buddhist has no particular view – that is the best view. He washes his mind clean – looks at everything as a baby might look at it and keeps nothing in his mind.

When I attained Sambhogakaya, I said – "I have found a star!" It was as the Buddha found it. But to find this empty mind – I struggled for twenty-five years! I studied philosophy and I studied junk – so I found the erroneous mind. And pureness of soul resides within this erroneous mind.

On Sunday mornings sometimes I listen to the radio. In one Sunday class, the minister was teaching the children that Christ was created by

God, so we are superior to the other races who do not read the Bible. It is hard on the Arabs, is it not? Why were only Christians created by God? In this way, children grow up with biased minds. Why must they be biased by such notions? Many people are crucified, buried alive in such terrible notions.

But if your mind is not biased by any notions – your life will be free of suffering!

June 3, 1936

ART

Zen students understand that the conclusion of Zen is daily life; but there is one more stage – that is Art. It is not so easy to come to this!

Once I said to a Christian gentleman, "I am off to a moving picture." "Oh, are you?" A Japanese monk going to a moving picture – "Oh!" According to such a view, a Japanese monk must not eat meat or go to a moving picture.

An artist's painting of a dancing figure on a wall is different from the dancer in living flesh. The life depicted on the stage is different from similar scenes in real life.

So, we say that everyday life is the conclusion of Zen – but in this everyday life there are many degrees. Zen students must observe this!

"Standing upon nowhere is the foundation." So do not stand upon any particular place – stand upon everywhere.

We stand upon Dharmakaya. This is the foundation – and it is an art.

October 28, 1936

Tentative date of next Zen retreat at the Institute:

July 08 - 09, 1995

Please call to confirm

In October 5, 1935, Sokei-an wrote the following resume to be sent to Daitokuji Chief Abbot.

To Oda Sesso, Daitokuji Kancho.

My family name is Sasaki. My forebears were retainers of the Takamatsu domain. After the Meiji Restoration, my father worked as a Shinto missionary. I was born in Takamatsu. I studied art under Takamura Koun, then at the Tokyo Art School, from whose sculpture department I graduated in April 1905. I was then 24 (23 by Western reckoning.) Before then, I had begun to study under Master Sokatsu at the Ryomokai, founded by the late teacher Soen, going to sanzen morning and evening, studying koans (wato) and receiving the lay Buddhist name Shigetsu. In June 1905, right after graduation, I was drafted to fight in the Russo-Japanese War, and was demobilized in March 1906.

In August 1906, I followed Sokatsu to the United States, remaining there for several years after his return to Japan in order to study various American cities. In August 1920, I returned to Japan to continue my Zen studies, which I completed thereafter, receiving my teacher's inka March 28, 1922. In August 1922 I returned to the US, and settled in New York City. After four years, my teacher again summoned me to Japan and I returned. In November 1926, I resumed my Zen studies at Ryomo-an. On September 29, 1927, I received appointment as missionary for the Ryomo Society. In August, at the request of old friends in America, I departed on my third trip to the US. Coming to New York, I busied myself preaching the Dharma in various quarters.

It was around this time that I decided to advance from my status of lay teacher to that of priest and became the disciple of Master Aono Futetsu, abbot of Manmanji. On March 15, 1933, I received the priestly precepts and the rank of attendant (jisha) at Daitokuji. On the occasion of the 600th anniversary of Daito's death, I received a robe and bowl from Master Aono, along with the [religious name] Soshin.

Currently, I am residing in New York City in North America, on West 70th Street; I have established a temple where I am teaching both Japanese and Americans.

[Signed]

Sasaki Soshin
October 5, 1935

THE GREAT SIXTH PATRIARCH TEACHINGS

Chapter IX, No. 1 and 2

On the fifteenth day of the first month of the first year of Shen-lung, the Dowager Empress Tse-T'ien, and the Emperor Chung-tsung issued the following decree:

"We have entreated the two masters [Hui-]An and [Shen-]Hsiu to accept our offerings in the palace. We shall endeavor to study their peerless vehicle whenever we can spare time from attending to the affairs of the empire. In humility, these two masters have deferred, saying: 'In the south is the Ch'an Master [Hui]-neng. To him were secretly transmitted the robe and the Dharma of the Great Master Hung-jen, who transmitted to him the seal of buddha-mind. You should summon him.'

"We hereby in haste send a royal servant, Hsieh Chien, as the bearer of our letter of invitation. We entreat you, Master, in your benevolence, to come at once to the capital."

The Master replied, declining the royal invitation on the grounds of illness and begging to live out his remaining years in the mountains.

Hsieh Chien said: "The Ch'an masters of the capital all say: 'If you wish to realize the Way, you must sit in meditation (dhyana) and practice samadhi. No one has ever achieved liberation without practicing dhyana-samadhi. What sort of teaching does your Reverence advocate?"

*The Master replied: "The Way depends on the enlightenment of the mind. How could it depend on sitting? The [*Diamond*]* Sutra *says: 'If you claim that the Tathagatha either sits or lies down, you are following a false path.' For what reason? Because there is nowhere from which he comes and nowhere to which he goes. That which neither appears nor vanishes is the pure dhyana of Tathagata. [In this state], all existence, being absolutely empty, is the pure seat of the Tathagata's meditation. Ultimately, there is nothing to prove, much less any need to sit in meditation. "*

SOKEI-AN SAYS

In this chapter the Sixth Patriarch clearly expresses his idea of Zen, which is entirely different from the Zen of the Northern School. In this part, he is treating meditation as if it were of no importance. Our Zen today, more or less, reflects his attitude. In Buddhism, there were many teachers who denied the merit of the sitting position. In China, it was the Sixth Patriarch who did so. However, you must remember this is his particular idea. *On the fifteenth day of the first month of the first year of Shen-lung, the Dowager Empress Tse-T'ien, and the Emperor Chung-tsung issued the following decree:* The fifteenth day of the first month of

the New Year is usually a great festival day in China. The first year of Shen-lung was 705. *Shen* means "god," and *lung* means "dragon." The name of this period in the dynasty was changed two or three times, each time upon the ascent or abdication of those on the throne.

The Dowager Empress Tse-t'ien was a famous Empress who became the mother of Buddhism in China. "Dowager Empress" sounds as if she were very old, but she was really very young. She became the Empress when she was about thirty-one. The Emperor Chung-tsung, her son, was quite young when he came to the throne, so it was she who ruled the country.

Buddhism and the Empress had an intimate relationship. She invited many Buddhist scholars from India to China. So when she heard that a more complete text of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* was in Khotan, in the territory of India, she sent her servants to beg for the Sanskrit text. The text was sent to China with a monk named Sikshananda. This monk traveled to Ch'ang-an and translated the sutra with Chinese scholars in A.D. 695.

"We have entreated the two masters, [Hui-]An and [Shen-]Hsiu": Both Hui-an and Shen-hsiu were disciples of the Fifth Patriarch Hung-jen. Shen-hsiu, as you know, was master of the Northern School. It is said that Hui-an lived a long time, dying at a great age, and that Shen-hsiu was tall and handsome and had silvery hair and whiskers that looked like white cream.

"To accept our offerings in the palace." The palace was in Ch'ang-an, today's Sian, the center of the Communist army. From the description's we have, it was very beautiful. It doesn't mean, however, that these two monks, or any others that were invited, had always to stay there.

"We shall endeavor to study their peerless vehicle whenever we can spare time from attending to the affairs of the empire." That is, they made a study of Zen, the "peerless vehicle."

"In humility, these two masters deferred, saying, 'In the south is the Ch'an master, [Hui]-neng. To him were secretly transmitted the robe and the Dharma of the Great Master Hung-jen.'" "In humility" means the Buddhist attitude. If I were invited to America and someone had asked me who the best scholar in Japan was, I would certainly recommend him.

This robe was handed down from the Buddha to Bodhidharma and from Bodhidharma to Hui-neng. The Dharma was transmitted, but the robe became very old, and its transmission came to an end in the time of the Sixth Patriarch. This part is very carefully written in the first chapter of this record.

"Who transmitted to him the seal of Buddha-mind. You should summon him." In Asia, we make the impression of a seal on a document, as you, here, put a signature on it. When Germany made peace with France, I heard they used a huge seal. But we in the Zen school do not use material seals. We use buddha-mind, face to face, and finally

reach the same conclusion. Then the Zen master gives his aknowledgment to the disciple. This cannot be written in any book. It must be mind to mind, eye to eye, soul to soul. I repeat this many times, but there must be no error.

Once the torchholders were many. Now in all of Japan there are perhaps two hundred. It is like the shaking of a candle before a storm. Once out, no one will know what was true and what was false. No one can find out. Everything will disappear. Buddhism will be wiped out. You must understand the value of the torch holder. In this Western world, they write about it; but they do not know the existence of this line, a line with a pedigree like a dog or cat – but more important than a Pekinese!

"We hereby in haste send a royal servant, Hsieh Chien, as the bearer of our letter of invitation. Hsieh Chien was the courtier of the Emperor Chung-tsung sent to invite the Sixth Patriarch to the city. Bearing the Emperor's letter, he went down south to Ts'ao-ch'i.

"We entreat you, Master, in your benevolence, to come at once to the capital." The Master replied, declining the royal invitation on the ground of illness and begging to live out his remaining years in the mountains. Refusing to live in the palace, the Sixth Patriarch stayed on the shore of Ts'ao-ch'i at the foot of a mountain, remaining there until he died.

Hsieh Chien said: "The Ch'an masters of the capital all say: 'If you wish to realize the Way, you must sit in meditation (dhyana) and practice samadhi." Dhyana does not exactly convey the same meaning as the English word translated here as "meditation." It is more than meditation. Samadhi can be translated into English as "absorption" – one who practices meditation is absorbed into that on which he meditates – but "absorption" is not a good translation either. There is no way to explain samadhi if you have had no experience of it. When you attain a real answer to a koan, at that moment you will be in samadhi. Absorption has a passive sense; but one realizes samadhi positively. It is true that when students just pass koans and do not get a great result it is because they are not trained to keep themselves in samadhi.

"No one has ever achieved liberation without practicing dhyana-samadhi. What sort of teaching does your Reverence advocate?" Dhyana-samadhi means zazen. When you practice zazen for many years and you attain the answer to a koan, samadhi becomes the ground of your knowledge, and you really attain enlightenment. A Zen master like the Sixth Patriarch is entirely different. He was born a bodhisattva. We cannot take his attitude. We must train ourselves in meditation and must meditate on our koans. Your experience of samadhi will testify to your knowledge of attainment. But if you are engrossed in the discussion of Buddhism and talk about it from morning to evening, you will only grow more deluded. You will never be emancipated from this deluded world.

The Master replied: "The Way depends on the enlightenment of the mind. How could it depend on sitting?" Of course, the attainment of Dharma is dependent upon enlightenment. If those who practice sitting from morning to evening attain enlightenment, then those beggars sitting on the way to the subway will attain enlightenment.

We practice the commandment to keep our mind quiet. To do this is to attain enlightenment, but we have no time for quietude. We have to attend to business and go home to fight with our wives and husbands. But the monks in the monastery had this commandment, so they meditated upon their koans with quiet mind. Then they came to enlightenment, to awakening.

To awaken is a very important point. I was very busy in the monastery. I had no time to sit and meditate, so I meditated standing! I was always concentrated – in the kitchen, in the bathroom, in the street-car, sweeping the garden, carving images for my teacher. When I came to a place where for a little while there would be no one, I stretched my mind to my koan and meditated upon it.

Some of those monks grew stupid sitting and meditating – it was nothing. You must work with your brain upon your question, must boil it down. Then the question becomes very clear. When you have any doubt about your koan, you cannot attain. To awaken is the goal.

*"The [*Diamond*]* Sutra *says:"* In the *Diamond Sutra*, there are three main viewpoints. We observe these viewpoints in the koans:

I) Everyone depends upon something – religious conviction, science, something heard or learned. In Christianity, it is the Bible. In Buddhism, it is the sutra. These people are like old men or women that depend upon a cane. Without a cane or notion, "depending upon nothing, manifest your mind." This is the first point.

2) All the enlightenments of the buddhas and tathagatas come from this *Diamond Sutra*, but not from the sutra that is on paper. The second point is: "What is the *Diamond Sutra*?"

3) Those who wish to see the Tathagata with their eye, or hear him with their ear, are following a false Dharma. One cannot see the Tathagata. So the third principle of the sutra is the koan: "How do you meet the Tathagata?"

"'If you claim that the Tathagatha either sits or lies down, you are following a false path.' For what reason? 'Because there is nowhere from which he comes and nowhere to which he goes.' "Comes" and "goes," "sits" and "lies" are the so-called four dignities. Tathagata means "as it is" – the state of Reality in this phenomenal world. *This* exists as *That*. When you attain the first koan, "Before father and mother, what were you?" you realize Tathagata. This Zen koan can be explained by Christian theology, too. Christ went back to the Father without changing his physical body – z-z-z-t! – and he went up. He was Tathagata, wasn't he? But if you affirm that he who comes and goes, sits and lies – sits under the Bodhi Tree

and lies under the sala tree – is Tathagata, you are following the false Dharma.

*"That which neither appears nor vanishes is the pure dhyana of Tatha*gata. How Christ went back to his Father, from the Christian viewpoint, the popular viewpoint, indicates that he had an abode. But he who has attained true Christian knowledge has no such notion. Tathagata has no abode. He is sitting here now! Did he come from somewhere? No! Will he will go somewhere? No! He did not come, and he will not go. He did not exist from the beginning, and he will not be annihilated.

[In this state], all existence, being absolutely empty, is the pure seat of the Tathagata's meditation." In the state of Reality, existence is empty because it has never been created and will not be destroyed. It exists forever, so it cannot be destroyed. But this is just our vision. In reality, it is empty. So when you observe thus, all existence is absolutely empty, and this emptiness is then the seat on which you meditate.

"Ultimately, there is nothing to prove": This is the highest statement of Buddhism, and there can be no higher statement than this. It is the end of Zen. Zen practice comes to an end after you have attained it. The Zen master will say, "Your Zen is over." So when your knowledge becomes one with Buddha, your Zen is at an end. Knowledge of a certain kind is easy to obtain, but practice is very hard. In enlightenment, there is nothing to think about or speak about.

"Much less any need to sit in meditation." The Sixth Patriarch just spit it out. He was very decisive – "Cast it out!" This statement about meditation created the Southern school of Zen, but Zen students of today practice both the Southern and the Northern schools of Zen.

Your attainment must be proved, but you prove it yourself. When you get your real answer to the first koan, you will say: "It can be nothing else!" But you must go to previous masters to compare your attainment. So even though you have no answer in sanzen, it is better to take it. Otherwise, you will keep your old notions, and your Master may die. If your hair catches fire, you don't say, "Tomorrow I will put it out." No. The Zen master will put it out immediately.

Hsieh Chien said: "When I return to the capital, the Emperor is certain to ask me about your teaching. I beg you, in your benevolence, point out for me the pivot of mind. I shall present it to the Emperor, the Dowager Empress, and the scholars in the city. It will be as though a single candle flame were to light a hundred thousand candles. Those which are unlit will be kindled, and from candle to candle, the flame will be transmitted to the endless end."

The Master said: "In the Way, there is neither light nor darkness. Light or darkness implies mutability. The light transmitted from candle to candle will be endless, but will also have an end because those names – light

and darkness – are relative designations. The Vimalakirti Sutra *says: 'Dharma is beyond comparison because it exists beyond the relative state.'"*

SOKEI-AN SAYS

Hsieh Chien said:" Hsieh Chien was the messenger to the Sixth Patriarch from the palace of the Emperor Chung-tsung.

"When I return to the capital, the Emperor is certain to ask me about your teaching. I beg you, in your benevolence, point out for me the pivot of mind. I shall present it to the Emperor, the Dowager Empress and the scholars in the city." I have used the translation "pivot of mind" for the Chinese Buddhist term *hsin-yao*, meaning "soul principle" or "principle of mind." As the eye of this fan is the pivot of the fan, so we have the pivot of mind.

Point out for me the pivot of mind. Where is it? In the brain? In the heart? In the abdomen? In the air? Where is the pivot of mind? "I beg you, O Patriarch," said Hsieh Chien, "point out for me the pivot of mind. I shall present it to the Emperor and the Empress and the scholars in the city." Very strange, isn't it? In ancient days, people were crazy about finding the pivot of mind, like trying to find the pivot of money today. I think, after all, the pivot of mind and the pivot of money are in the same place.

There is a famous koan about this pivot of mind, the koan of the elephant fan. A master said to his disciple: "Fetch me the elephant fan made from the bone of an elephant. I use it every day from morning to evening." The disciple said, "The fan is broken, sir." "Then bring me the elephant," said the master.

This fan is easily broken when the pivot is broken. The elephant fan is the symbol of the mind. When the pivot of the mind is broken, though we have eyes, ears, hands and feet, we are not men any more. We should be locked up somewhere as insane. But in Buddhist symbology, when the pivot of the fan we have been using is broken, it is different from insanity; it means we have attained enlightenment - the fan which we use in this deluded world, our deluded mind, has been broken; it has lost its pivot, and we have attained enlightenment. When the master said to the disciple, "Then bring me the elephant," he meant, "Bring me enlightenment." This is so-called Zen speech.

The monks said queer things – "The deluded mind has been broken!" "Oh, so your worldly mind has been broken? And you have been in heaven? Then bring me God!" It's the same thing. Then what do you do? When the pivot is broken and we attain enlightenment, what is enlightenment? Bring it to me.

This koan was produced in the later period of Zen in China. The Sixth Patriarch answers it a little later.

and lies under the sala tree – is Tathagata, you are following the false Dharma.

*"That which neither appears nor vanishes is the pure dhyana of Tatha*gata. How Christ went back to his Father, from the Christian viewpoint, the popular viewpoint, indicates that he had an abode. But he who has attained true Christian knowledge has no such notion. Tathagata has no abode. He is sitting here now! Did he come from somewhere? No! Will he will go somewhere? No! He did not come, and he will not go. He did not exist from the beginning, and he will not be annihilated.

[In this state], all existence, being absolutely empty, is the pure seat of the Tathagata's meditation." In the state of Reality, existence is empty because it has never been created and will not be destroyed. It exists forever, so it cannot be destroyed. But this is just our vision. In reality, it is empty. So when you observe thus, all existence is absolutely empty, and this emptiness is then the seat on which you meditate.

"Ultimately, there is nothing to prove": This is the highest statement of Buddhism, and there can be no higher statement than this. It is the end of Zen. Zen practice comes to an end after you have attained it. The Zen master will say, "Your Zen is over." So when your knowledge becomes one with Buddha, your Zen is at an end. Knowledge of a certain kind is easy to obtain, but practice is very hard. In enlightenment, there is nothing to think about or speak about.

"Much less any need to sit in meditation." The Sixth Patriarch just spit it out. He was very decisive – "Cast it out!" This statement about meditation created the Southern school of Zen, but Zen students of today practice both the Southern and the Northern schools of Zen.

Your attainment must be proved, but you prove it yourself. When you get your real answer to the first koan, you will say: "It can be nothing else!" But you must go to previous masters to compare your attainment. So even though you have no answer in sanzen, it is better to take it. Otherwise, you will keep your old notions, and your Master may die. If your hair catches fire, you don't say, "Tomorrow I will put it out." No. The Zen master will put it out immediately.

Hsieh Chien said: "When I return to the capital, the Emperor is certain to ask me about your teaching. I beg you, in your benevolence, point out for me the pivot of mind. I shall present it to the Emperor, the Dowager Empress, and the scholars in the city. It will be as though a single candle flame were to light a hundred thousand candles. Those which are unlit will be kindled, and from candle to candle, the flame will be transmitted to the endless end."

The Master said: "In the Way, there is neither light nor darkness. Light or darkness implies mutability. The light transmitted from candle to candle will be endless, but will also have an end because those names – light

and darkness – are relative designations. The Vimalakirti Sutra *says: 'Dharma is beyond comparison because it exists beyond the relative state.'"*

SOKEI-AN SAYS

Hsieh Chien said:" Hsieh Chien was the messenger to the Sixth Patriarch from the palace of the Emperor Chung-tsung.

"When I return to the capital, the Emperor is certain to ask me about your teaching. I beg you, in your benevolence, point out for me the pivot of mind. I shall present it to the Emperor, the Dowager Empress and the scholars in the city." I have used the translation "pivot of mind" for the Chinese Buddhist term *hsin-yao*, meaning "soul principle" or "principle of mind." As the eye of this fan is the pivot of the fan, so we have the pivot of mind.

Point out for me the pivot of mind. Where is it? In the brain? In the heart? In the abdomen? In the air? Where is the pivot of mind? "I beg you, O Patriarch," said Hsieh Chien, "point out for me the pivot of mind. I shall present it to the Emperor and the Empress and the scholars in the city." Very strange, isn't it? In ancient days, people were crazy about finding the pivot of mind, like trying to find the pivot of money today. I think, after all, the pivot of mind and the pivot of money are in the same place.

There is a famous koan about this pivot of mind, the koan of the elephant fan. A master said to his disciple: "Fetch me the elephant fan made from the bone of an elephant. I use it every day from morning to evening." The disciple said, "The fan is broken, sir." "Then bring me the elephant," said the master.

This fan is easily broken when the pivot is broken. The elephant fan is the symbol of the mind. When the pivot of the mind is broken, though we have eyes, ears, hands and feet, we are not men any more. We should be locked up somewhere as insane. But in Buddhist symbology, when the pivot of the fan we have been using is broken, it is different from insanity; it means we have attained enlightenment - the fan which we use in this deluded world, our deluded mind, has been broken; it has lost its pivot, and we have attained enlightenment. When the master said to the disciple, "Then bring me the elephant," he meant, "Bring me enlightenment." This is so-called Zen speech.

The monks said queer things – "The deluded mind has been broken!" "Oh, so your worldly mind has been broken? And you have been in heaven? Then bring me God!" It's the same thing. Then what do you do? When the pivot is broken and we attain enlightenment, what is enlightenment? Bring it to me.

This koan was produced in the later period of Zen in China. The Sixth Patriarch answers it a little later.

"It will be as though a single candle flame were to light a hundred thousand candles." When I speak about Buddhism, you go home and speak to your mother, your father, your brother and sister, like a candle lighting other candles. But it is my experience that if you speak about Buddhism to your mother, she will say: "Hush, don't speak about paganism!" One girl who came here went home and spoke to her mother about my words. Later, that young girl wrote me a very pathetic letter.

When I was young, I went to a Christian church. My uncle found out about this and became very angry. I had a hard time explaining my attitude. We are still living in medieval times and not yet free in our minds. Yet, scientifically, we are living in a modern world with electricity, protons, electrons, steam trains, etc. Mentally, however, we are still living in medieval castles surrounded by moats. Knights with long spears still stand on guard by the gates of the mind.

"Those which are unlit will be kindled, and from candle to candle, the flame will be transmitted to the endless end." In the Zen school, the fire of the candle, which is the pivot of mind, is transmitted from Shakyamuni Buddha through the generations to us.

The Master said: "In the Way, there is neither light nor darkness." The "Way" is *Tao*. As used in Chinese Buddhism, Tao signifies religion, dharma or law, the way of knowledge, the way of morality, the way of mind – your walk in life. What is your walk? I am a physician, monk, shoemaker. In Chinese, these are also expressed by the word Tao. But by this Tao the Sixth Patriarch meant the highest Tao in the world. Here there is neither light nor darkness.

"Light or darkness implies mutability." Day goes and night comes; night goes and day comes. Light and dark, dark and light are endlessly changing phases. This is not the highest Tao. We have life and death, death and life, and we change accordingly. I was a student, now I am a monk. I was a soldier, now I am a physician. I was a shoemaker, now I am a grocery man. In the mind, there is life and death every day.

The Goddess of the Moon repeats life and death every month. On the first of the month the crescent moon appears, and on the fifteenth day, the full moon is at its zenith. On the thirtieth day the moon dies again, but the God of the Sun dies every day. Our mind dies every moment, but the mind is also born every moment, is constantly mutable. The highest Tao never takes this mutable phase.

When I went to a psychoanalyst, he said, "What are you thinking now?" "A watch." "What next?" I said: "What next? Doctor, I am not thinking anything now." I despised that doctor for trying to find the system of my mind in such an artificial way.

"The light transmitted from candle to candle will be endless, but will also have an end because those names – light and darkness – are relative designations." We know heat because we know cold. We say this is red because we know green, yellow or purple. If the whole world were

red, we could not know red. When I was young, I thought all men had yellow skins because I had never seen a white man. When I was twelve years old, I went to Yokahama and saw a white man on a pier. It was so strange. It was like a fish in the sea that does not know salt water because it has never known fresh water.

We are conscious of all things because of the variety. If there were only one thing, we would not know it. If the universe is zero, when we are conscious of zero, it is already one, for zero is something. Real nothingness is neither zero nor one, so that which is the highest Dharma is neither zero nor one. It is a state that we cannot conceive with our own mind. That which we cannot see with our eye is God.

"The Vimalakirti Sutra *says: 'Dharma is beyond comparison because it exists beyond the relative state.'"* It is absolute. We observe the sun from here – we observe many things – but the sun also observes us. The whole universe is nothing but *fire*, and absolute. We should realize this absolute state once in our lifetime. Then from that standpoint, we will observe this world and our daily life in it. This world becomes something else – becomes a new world. You, too, become something else and have a new life.

Our life was given to us by our mother, and we came out crying "Wa-a-ah" – opened our eyes and accepted this world without question. But we have not yet created our own world. We are given this world, this big apple! We must realize it, accept it, and create our own world. When the whole world is our own, then the law is our own law.

THE SKY SPEAKS

"'The world is created by consciousness.' I borrow these words from the English dictionary to describe my mind, which perceives objects as water mirrors them, which preserves impressions of the outside as the earth preserves the seeds, and which reacts to outer existences as fire reacts to the wind. The Buddhist sect known as the 'Consciousness Only' sect was based upon the postulate expressed by those words, 'The world is created by consciousness.' You have heard of its founder, the great philosopher Vasubandhu, who lived about a thousand years after Buddha's death. Professor Hamilton of Oberlin College has recently published a translation of Vasubandhu's 'Treatise in Twenty Stanzas on Representation-Only.' You must read it, Daniel."

"Must I read it?" My friend Daniel looked a little wilted as he said this. He occasionally comes to visit me in the late summer, and this was a very warm day.

"My own view is nearly the same as that of this sect. What is called

Consciousness appears in man as his Mind. Consciousness, however, is deeper and greater than man's mind. Just as the demon Hariti carries her five hundred babies, so the Greater Consciousness carries men's ego consciousness. Sometimes this Great Consciousness is called 'Everlasting Consciousness.' When it appears within it is called Mind. When it appears without it is called Matter. When consciousness within meets consciousness without, the phenomenal appears. Our eyes see it in seven different colors. Our ears hear it in seven different tones. Our tongue tastes it in five different flavors. Our nose smells it in 557 different odors. And the pores of our skin feel it in 84,000 individual sensations."

"Hold your horses, Professor! Hold your horses!" cried Daniel.

But I would not rein in! "When nothing is reflected upon Mind, Mind is unaware of its own existence. Matter alone, existing outside, assumes no form. When Mind and Matter make contact, Matter is reflected upon Mind, and Mind conceives the form of the appearance of Matter. When the eyes perceive the outside and this perception is conceived by the Mind, man cognizes the world outside. Originally both outside and inside were one and the same consciousness, but men take them as by something else, and run after them as my cat runs after his own tail. The phenomenal, therefore, is the conversation between Mind and Matter. The sky salutes the Mind of man. The autumn salutes the Mind of man. The maple leaves salute the mind of man. All existing things salute my inmost Mind. I understand the meaning of their words. Do you understand, Daniel?"

Daniel answered, "..... !"

"I understand what you mean, Daniel. But do you understand what the maple leaf says?"

"Of course, Professor. I see the scarlet color of the leaf."

"Do you understand what the autumn says?"

"Certainly. Today is warm; tomorrow will be cool."

"Then, Daniel, perhaps you understand what the sky speaks. There is a saying in Zen, 'The Great Earth has no mote of dust.' This is a wonderful saying! The 'Great Earth' symbolizes consciousness by itself. When the Great Earth of Consciousness harbors no mote of dust, man will discover the true nature of the mind. For us the meaning of discipline is to dig deep into the mind and to uncover its pure nature, the mind's original nature which cherishes no mote of dust. Buddhism is merely a certain type of human thought, and Zen is merely a way of viewing actual existence. Thoughts and views are also dust in the mind. Eradicate them and return to Man himself! When you become Man himself you can understand what the sky speaks with its honest mind."

Daniel and the cat were both yawning.

"What is the matter, Daniel?"

"I certainly understand the words the sky speaks, but I fail to understand what you are talking about."

Sokei-an Sasaki
"Cat's Yawn" Vol. 1, No. 3

Above – Vairocana. Painting left to the Institute by Anthony Tudor.
Front cover – Manjusri in residence in the Institute's Zendo

THE ZEN EYE

A Collection of Zen Talks by Sokei-an
edited by Mary Farkas

The wisdom of Sokei-an (1882-1945), the first Zen Master to settle in the United States, once prized and passed down as an underground classic, now appearing in print for the first time.

208 pp 6 x 8 1/4 $12.95 (soft)
0-8348-0272-4

To order **THE ZEN EYE**, call WEATHERHILL INC. at 1 800 437 7840

Zen notes

Copyright 1995

PUBLISHED BY

THE FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.

VOLUME XLII, NUMBER 3 SUMMER 1995

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED